

## THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DONNA ISABEL

A Treasure-Ship Romance

By RANDALL PARRISH

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CHAPTER I.  
Adventure.

My story begins in April, 1878. At that time I, Jack Stevens, U. S. N., had for weeks been in hiding in Valparaiso. The Chilean authorities were after me for my share in a revolution that failed. My sole adventure while I was hiding there was to throw a Chilean sailor, Sanchez by name, who insulted me marvellously pretty girl. The girl was with an old man—a tourist—the Earl of Darlington, whose yacht, Sea Queen, lay in the harbor.

On the same day I was approached by a secret service man from Peru, who engaged me to captain a crew of ruffians whom he had persuaded to steal the Emerald, a Chilean warship, which just then lay in port.

The crew were ruffians. Their first officer was an eccentric old New England whaler named Tuttle. The second officer was De Nova, a South American.

Under cover of darkness we rowed out to the vessel (capturing and lugging along a Chilean who raised an alarm). We boarded the ship, easily overcame such of her crew as were aboard, and impressed the Scotch engineer into our service. Then we steamed out of the harbor unseen.

It was not until we had been under weigh for hours that I happened upon a handsomely furnished cabin, in which were two women. One of them was a ladies' maid. The other was the girl I had rescued from Sanchez. Then it was that I saw what we had done. In the darkness we had gotten aboard the wrong vessel. We had missed the Emerald and had boarded the Earl of Darlington's yacht, "Sea Queen."

Darlington himself was ashore. But these two women had been spending the night aboard. So silent and swift had we been, that they did not know the yacht had fallen into our hands; but supposed she was sailing under Darlington's crew and at the Earl's orders. He had planned to leave Valparaiso that night.

I explained the situation, assuring the women they should be treated with every respect at the first possible port. They took the advice more calmly than I had dared to hope. But during our talk, I learned to my own amazement that the girl I had rescued was not Sanchez's daughter, but really Lady Darlington, his wife. I found this when, in ignorance of foreign titles, I addressed her as "Doris." Doris, having heard the Earl call her "Doris."

Full of my news I went to the chart room where Tuttle and De Nova were seated. There I encountered fresh shocks. Tuttle frankly admitted to me that he and De Nova and the rest had known all along they were boarding the Sea Queen and not the Emerald. I only had been fooled. They had lured me into the venture, because they needed me to handle the vessel, none of them understanding steamships.

When I demanded to know the reason, Tuttle calmly informed me we were not bound for Peru, but to the Antarctic. Far in the frozen South, he had heard of an old chart showing a Spanish treasure galleon, the Donna Isabel. In 1753, carrying a hoard of gold, the Donna Isabel had lost her way and become imbedded in the ice. Since then, from a distance, on one of his whaling trips, Tuttle, himself, had seen her. And, thither, to seize the treasure, we were even now proceeding.

I could do nothing but make the best of the situation. Resistance meant death. I secured from Tuttle and De Nova a solemn pledge that the two women should be treated with respect and should be set ashore at the earliest moment it could be arranged.

It was arranged that Lady Darlington should accompany me, and that the men should keep away from her end of the yacht.

The next afternoon De Nova was passing the helmsman's post, and the companion and I had barely walked over to the port rail, observing that we were ploughing along through a dense bank of fog, when the voice of a woman called from the forecastle.

"Doris," she called, "Doris!"

"Whereaway?" asked De Nova, peering anxiously forward. "I can see nothing."

"Only caught her through a hole in the fog, sir, one point off the weather-bow," said the helmsman, who was bound I was up to the steps to the bridge and beside the second officer, recklessly determined to "assume command. Before he clearly realized my presence, I fastened the helm in the engine room.

"Hold her steady as she is," I said sternly to the fellow grasping the wheel.

De Nova wheeled and faced me, his black eyes full of sudden anger.

"What you mean?" he exclaimed, so surprised he stuttered. "I was officer on deck."

"And I am commanding the yacht, sir," De Nova retorted quickly, reaching back his hand from the signal.

"I propose speaking that vessel round, and transferring our course. Port a little, my man—no, port, you fool—now hold her so steady."

De Nova grasped my arm, his fingers clenching, but he broke away, pressing in between him and the rail.

"Lay your hands on me again," I threatened sternly. "And I'll floor you in the deck. I'll take that grin off your face, De Nova, if you attempt any interference with me now."

I understood quickly enough what I meant, and evidently had no relish for the fight. I turned to the left, on a swift, searching glance into the fog, he leaped down the steps and ran hastily aft. I knew he was seeking the backing of a belaying pin, and I turned to the right, my eyes peering eagerly meanwhile for the nearby sail and cursing the fellow at the wheel for not holding her to the point directed.

Then, two steps at a time, Tuttle and I hurried to the forecastle, where we found the bridge Bill Anderson, the helmsman, swung himself out of the hatch and started after them, his feet on the ladder, while he complained to the fellow grasping the wheel.

"You'd better keep back," I warned threateningly. "I'm ready to brain the first man who attempts to touch me."

Tuttle stopped, his jaws working nervously, his eyes on mine.

"Will you promise to keep quiet, sir, and let us get away out of this?" he asked, his eyes pleading.

## "Back Up! I Need Your Space."



THE NEWS COLUMN

depressed a stress to add thus to their risk of capture. I understand this fully and must learn to face the bitter truth with all the courage I can muster. Even you are now helpless, also, a prisoner in this cabin."

"For the time being I am practically under arrest," I coincided; "yet I am of value to those in control, and it is not likely they will keep me confined below long. None among them are competent steam navigators, and they can operate the yacht only under the most ordinary conditions."

"You believe you will be returned to command?" her eyes, flashing up to me suddenly. "Oh, then there is some hope left!"

I hesitated, desiring to speak the full truth, yet convinced that I ought not to deceive her.

"I cannot say that, Lady Darlington. These men will make use of my training and knowledge so soon as we are in waters where they feel reasonably safe from pursuit. But they will never trust me again or yield me any authority. I can perceive at present no way of escape."

She did not move, her eyes lowered to the carpet, her hands clasped tightly, her bosom rising and falling with quick, nervous breathing.

"It is so strange," she said, speaking apparently to herself, "that I feel no deep sense of fear—physical fear, I mean. The dreadful situation in which we are is apparent enough, yet it seems unreal, impossible. No doubt the very terrible of it has paralyzed my nerves. I cannot seem to think, to consider the actuality of our surroundings. The shock of discovery has been too great to permit of reflection. My mind dwells upon those left behind, who, perhaps, will never know what has befallen me. I must be months, at the best, before I can relieve their anxiety. Dreadful as our situation is, yet to live in constant uncertainty is even worse." She arose to her feet, and her face brightened. "But I am not a coward, Mr. Stephens; not a weak, complaining woman, and fresh inspiration has been given me by the knowledge that I have on board one friend whom I love."

"Little as is the hope I can offer," I interposed gravely. "I will yet serve you to the best of my ability."

"I know you will," her voice low, but confident. "In what direction are you not sailing?"

"Almost due south."

She shivered, her eyes still upon my face.

"Do you believe this man, Tuttle's story?"

"I hardly know what to believe," I confessed frankly. "The man himself is a mystery to me, and his yarn sounds melodramatic and almost impossible. Moreover, it is totally at variance with all published charts of those regions. Yet we, who are bred to the sea, are accustomed to miracles; and really it makes no difference what we believe, for the faith of the crew is beyond question, and they mean to take the Sea Queen to the spot indicated."

"To sixty-six degrees seventeen minutes south."

She glanced helplessly about the cabin, as though thus endeavoring to realize where she was, and what future confronted her.

"Oh, I cannot, cannot grasp it. Mr. Stephens! It seems a horrid dream from which I must awaken. If this were only some other vessel, it would be easier for me to realize our predicament. But I have traveled so many miles within this cabin; it has been my home, where I have been mistress, surrounded by those I knew, every object familiarly associated with social and family life. That I cannot comprehend that all is changed—that I am now a prisoner in the hands of desperate men, being borne away into a sea of ice, utterly alone, utterly alone."

"She sat back upon the divan, her face buried in her hands, sobbing without effort at restraint. I could not refrain from lending to the assumption of her grief the reassurance of my presence, going beside her and

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By Robert Minor

NEXT WEEK'S COMPLETE NOVEL IN THE EVENING WORLD

## THE WOLF MAN

By S. CARLETON

circumstances," and I gazed directly into her eyes. "I believe in you, and the knowledge of your real nature as just revealed has only served to strengthen my confidence in you. You may doubt your courage, but I do not. Whatever the need, Lady Darlington, you are the one who will fail. Your eyes tell me that, and I intend to trust in them. Although you are a woman, you possess the stout heart of your race."

"I mean the lightning bolt of old England; the stuff which has floated across the seas of St. George the world around."

She drew a quick breath, her lips parted.

"But I am not English, except by adoption. I am of American ancestry."

The frank avowal astounded me, it came so unexpectedly; yet I was quick enough to turn it to good account.

"So much the better. It draws us even closer, to be of the same blood. I possess greater faith in the power of my own countrymen than most of my friends possess."

"I am glad to hear that," I said, talking of other matters. No good can result from dwelling longer on the situation in which we find ourselves, with there is nothing to be done but wait."

It was not an easy task to lead her mind into other channels. The fierce pitching of the vessel, the distant sounds of voices on deck, all conspired to defeat my purpose by reminding her that we were being buffeted by the great surges of the South Sea. Yet she endeavored bravely to respond to my thought, so that, at last, our conversation drifted, almost naturally, from the mere facts of the situation to a frank exchange of impressions upon many topics of common intelligent understanding was not to be wondered at, but I read in her face a warning interest in the discovery that a sailor could have read widely and reflected clearly upon subjects supposed to belong exclusively to the world of earth and sea, and that it had been privileged to sit thus in cordial, unrestrained intercourse with a cultured woman, and for the time being I forgot all except her presence, and the delight of her voice.

The indescribable charm of it abides with me still in memory, the intelligence of the gray eyes uplifted questioningly to mine over the lips smiling to some sally of wit or story of humor, the flush deepening on the cheeks, the swift, purposeful gestures of the hands.

Thought began to flow, words poured in careless abandon, and I unconsciously we opened up the depths of our past history, rather than chance acquaintances flung together by an strange fate as ever befell human beings. Never do I forget that cabin of the Sea Queen, with our again beholding her, braced against the green plush of the divan, her eyes glowing, her fair face reflecting such changing emotion of the soul.

We indulged in no personal references, although I confess a strong temptation to do so. As the English marriage, she afforded me no opportunity, or rather no excuse, and consequently I said nothing, for in truth she was a woman of such a nature that she proved most frank, most direct, and most unselfish in all that she said, and she retained an intangible reserve which clearly drew the line of intimacy.

How long we may have thus conversed I could not say, for time slipped by unnoted by either. Twice Celeste peeped about the end of the piano, a scarlet ribbon flaming at her hair, but she never came near her. We were diving into the fascinating cult of Hindu religions, and she was busily explaining certain experiments in the occult which she had learned from the East.

The rain came from the bright light outside to the dimness of the cabin—for a tarpaulin had been stretched across the skylight—partially blinding him, but he succeeded in turning me to forgetfulness of loneliness and peril. I can only thank you with all a woman's gratitude."

"Goin' to have a squall, of rain," he explained naively. "I came down after some oilskin."

He went directly into his state-room, which was just across from mine, and the moment he disappeared, I and Darlington arose from the divan.

"We have certainly been permitting our thoughts to wander, Mr. Stephens," she said, looking at me. "I was just thinking of the gravity of our situation, and how we must keep our wits about us."

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